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Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level
Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development
Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean

Santiago, Chile, 16-20 March 1992

PROVISIONAL ANNOTATED AGENDA

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I. PROVISIONAL AGENDA

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II. ANNOTATIONS TO THE PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Introduction

1. The Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean is an initiative proposed by the Minister of Housing and Urban Development of Chile. Besides ECLAC and Chile's Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, the meeting is co-sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS-Habitat).

2. The meeting will be held in two parts. A technical meeting of government experts and representatives of lending institutions and international technical cooperation agencies followed by the meeting of ministers itself.

1. Election of officers

3. In accordance with established practice, the meeting will begin with the election of a Chairman, two Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. Traditionally, the chairmanship is offered to the host country.

4. It is proposed that the technical meeting be organized as indicated in the attached tentative programme.

2. Adoption of the provisional agenda

5. The representatives may wish to consider and adopt the agenda prepared by the secretariat and contained in this document. Under the rules of procedure, delegations may take this opportunity to make such observations and suggest such amendments as they consider appropriate.

3. Country reports on housing and urban development

6. Human settlements in the region have undergone profound changes over the last few decades. A process of rapid urbanization, originally concentrated in a few cities, is now affecting a greater number of medium-sized cities. Given these conditions and severe constraints on the allocation of public expenditure and private saving, the countries have had to face ever greater difficulties in meeting the basic needs of the population, including shelter, and in achieving a balanced urban development.

7. The representatives will be able to report on the main trends in urban development and housing in their countries; government policies in these areas; and the main obstacles to their successful application. It is suggested that account be taken of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000^{*/}, and that particular emphasis be placed on questions of international financing for housing; the focusing of resources on low-cost housing and the capacity to recover costs; and the restoration and repopulation of deteriorated urban areas.

4. International financing for housing

8. External resources are an important source of financing for low-cost housing programmes and urban development in the countries of the region. Obtaining them is subject to certain conditionalities that vary according to the lending or support policies of each source. They are administered under operational mechanisms which reflect the corresponding internal practices of the funding body and the recipient countries.

9. The meeting will examine the region's experience with international funding and support organizations (multilateral lending institutions, bilateral agencies and technical assistance and support agencies); how their policies and operational practices condition low-cost housing programmes in the countries; and how improvements can be introduced in order to expand the coverage of these operations, allow for more effective attention to low-income sectors and increase the efficiency of their administration.

^{*/} See General Assembly resolution 43/181.

5. Focusing resources on low-cost housing and the capacity to recover costs

10. In this section the participants will consider the degree of success attained by strategies designed to achieve a more equitable allocation of resources for low-cost housing. This entails a review of the criteria used to identify and select the beneficiaries of public-sector programmes and of the conditionalities imposed on their execution, analysing whether or not the programmes are able to reach the poorest sectors.

11. The reason for examining the housing policies applied in the region is to arrive at some general conclusions to guide the Governments with respect to the advantages, disadvantages and conditions required to bring to a successful conclusion various programmes, such as those that target extreme poverty, subsidy plans or integral programmes which include attention to middle-class sectors.

12. Given the present economic context of many countries of the region, characterized by high inflation rates and difficulties in attracting long-term savings, it is particularly important to discuss the mechanisms used by the countries to attract savings and administer loans so that they maintain their value, preventing the decapitalization of the institutions that channel resources to the sector. The meeting will endeavour to analyse aspects of the following: capacity for personal saving; instruments used to attract that saving and direct it to low-cost housing; mobilization of institutional savings; recovery of loans; capacity and willingness to repay on the part of participants in this kind of programme; and the administration of loans using criteria of efficiency and low cost.

6. Restoration and repopulation of deteriorated city centres

13. The meeting will examine the changes that have taken place in the downtown areas of the region's large and medium-sized cities, the impact of those changes on the efficiency of urban activities, and the preservation and use of the infrastructure already in place and of cultural heritage. An analysis will be made of the depopulation of some city centres, the rise in price of urban land and speculation on urban property, and the promotion of economic activity in city centres.

14. Through the presentation of international and regional experiences with programmes for the restoration and preservation of cities and cultural heritage, the participant will discuss policies and mechanisms to incentivate urban renovation which can be applied in the countries of the region.

7. A permanent mechanism for exchange of experiences among ministers of housing and urban development of the region

15. The initiative of Chile's Minister of Housing and Urban Development for the establishment of a permanent regional mechanism for exchange between the countries of the region at the ministerial level will be considered. The purpose of this mechanism would be to coordinate sectoral policies and carry out actions of horizontal cooperation between the countries.

16. The meeting may decide on the possible organizational structure of the mechanism, forms of participation, its articles of association and other aspects which make it possible to establish it.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

17. On the basis of the discussions which take place on Agenda items 4, 5, 6 and 7, one or more documents will probably result from this meeting; these will be prepared by the Governments themselves and will contain guidelines for the possible implementation of a permanent mechanism for exchange between the region's ministers of housing and urban development, as well as a regional overview of the main challenges facing the countries with regard to housing and urban development which may serve as a basis for structuring the activities of the coordinating mechanism in question.

9. Consideration and adoption of the report of the meeting

18. The Rapporteur will submit a draft final report for adoption by the representatives of the member countries.